

Potomac Savings Bank  
(now National Bank of Washington  
Georgetown Branch)  
1200 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.  
Washington (Georgetown)  
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-323

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

POTOMAC SAVINGS BANK  
(NOW NATIONAL BANK OF WASHINGTON,  
GEORGETOWN BRANCH)

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123 -

Location: 1200 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W. (Georgetown),  
northwest corner of M Street (formerly Bridge  
Street), and Wisconsin Avenue (formerly High  
Street), Washington, D.C.

Present Owner  
and Occupant: National Bank of Washington

Present Use: Bank

Statement of  
Significance: This is an example of a large mid-nineteenth  
century commercial brick building of the Georgetown  
area, employing classical architectural features  
and decoration.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Circa 1850; rebuilt 1909.
2. Architect: Unknown; builder unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: On the 1887 Hopkins Atlas the property is labelled "E. M. Linthicum Hrs." The bank was originally the Potomac Savings Bank, organized May 8, 1903, and at that time located at the southwest corner of Wisconsin Avenue and N Street, N.W. In 1904 Potomac Savings bought the property at 1200 Wisconsin Avenue for \$37,500 and moved the following year to the northeast corner of Wisconsin Avenue and M Street, where the present Riggs Bank Branch is now located. In 1909 the building at 1200 Wisconsin Avenue burned, and after spending \$24,000 on repairs and remodeling, Potomac Savings moved into the new structure in 1910. This bank remained here until March 5, 1933, when it closed. It reopened on September 25, 1933, as the Hamilton National Bank. On October 1, 1954, the Hamilton merged with the National Bank of Washington and became its Georgetown Branch. (Information largely from Mr. W. Jeffries Chewning, Jr., Assistant Cashier.)
4. Alterations and additions: The bank building itself, which was built about 1850, appears originally to have been three adjacent structures, each about 20 feet wide, judging from the foundations now visible in the basement.

Under the southern portion, one 20-foot length of stone wall is exposed. In 1909, after the building had burnt, the Potomac Savings Bank spent \$24,000 on repairs and remodeling.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This rectangular three-story brick bank building, erected circa 1850 and redesigned from what appear to have been originally three adjacent structures, is situated at the intersection of the two main commercial streets of Georgetown. Its noteworthy features are a handsome classical portico, two projecting bays of pressed tin, and an elaborate pressed-metal cornice. (West of the bank building is a second structure, about 18 feet wide on M Street and separated from the bank by a space about 2 feet wide. This building, while not part of the bank, was remodeled--presumably in 1909--to match the south side of the bank and continues its fenestration and entablature.)

2. Condition of fabric: Good.

### B. Description of Exterior:

This rectangular brick building measures approximately 60' north-south (nine-bay front) by 50'. The basement story is sheathed in light brown Aquia Creek sandstone with chamfered joints once painted gray. The brickwork above this is also painted a light gray. On the east side facing Wisconsin Avenue is a classical portico composed of two monolithic unfluted Doric columns of gray granite, 26" in diameter at the base, with sandstone caps painted gray to match; an entablature with a Greek key frieze; and a low pediment decorated with palmettes and a lion head at the north and south corners.

The first-floor windows are six-over-six sash with central panes which are considerably larger than the side panes. Above each window is a six-light transom. On the south side are two rectangular projecting bays of pressed tin decorated with Doric pilasters at the window level. On the second floor the flat headed windows are one-over-one sash, with no other decoration than a simple modern iron railing across some of the bottom sash. On the north wall of the bank (facing a nine-foot alley), the fenestration appears to be of an older type. Here, the one-over-one sash windows are under segmental arches; the brick is less heavily painted and can be seen to be laid in

common bond with header courses every six and seven rows.  
The west or rear side is not painted at all.

The pressed-metal cornice with dentils is supported on large brackets (paired on the south, single on the east) which reach from the lowest level of the entablature; between the brackets there are raised brick panels in the frieze. Above the cornice is a plain brick parapet with metal coping. One square chimney is visible at the southwest corner of the building. The cornice returns only about three feet on the north (alley) side.

C. Description of Interior:

On the interior there is rich academic classical decoration in the main banking hall--the southern forty feet of the first floor. The other first-floor offices, and the rooms on the second and third floors--reached by an exterior door at the northeast corner of the building, numbered 1204 Wisconsin Avenue--are completely remodeled, with no old features remaining.

D. Site:

The building dominates the northwest corner of the intersection of M Street and Wisconsin Avenue, the main commercial streets of Georgetown. On the opposite side of the street is the Riggs National Bank, Farmers and Mechanics Office. The two banking institutions are important focal points at this intersection.

Prepared by Daniel D. Reiff  
Architectural Historian  
Commission of Fine Arts  
August 1969

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were made in 1969 during a project to record 14 structures and a group of 16 items of "street furniture" in the Georgetown section of Washington, D.C. The project was conducted by the Commission of Fine Arts with the cooperation of the Historic American Buildings Survey. The resulting documentation was donated to HABS by the Commission and published in 1970 in HABS Selections Number 10, Georgetown Architecture: Northwest Washington, District of Columbia.

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The project was under the direction of Mr. Charles H. Atherton, Executive Secretary and Administrative Officer of the Commission of Fine Arts. The recording team was composed of Miss Ellen J. Schwartz and Mr. Daniel D. Reiff, Architectural Historians, and Mr. William P. Thompson, Architect. The photographs were made by photographers J. Alexander and Jack E. Boucher under contract to the Commission.

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